



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE QURAN.

By DR. GUSTAV WEIL.

Translated from the second edition, with notes and references to the Quran and to other authorities, by Professor Frank K. Sanders, Ph.D. and Harry W. Dunning, B.A., of Yale University.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

It should be noted that this translation is not always literal. The aim has been to convey the author's exact meaning in idiomatic English. Weil's opening paragraph has been omitted for reasons obvious to one who has consulted the original. The spelling of proper names has been conformed to the original Arabic, except in the case of thoroughly Anglicized words.

For the convenience of the student a list of the more accessible works on the life of Muhammad is given below:

1. Weil, Dr. Gustav: *Mohammed der Prophet, sein Leben und seine Lehre*, 1843. A complete life of the prophet giving in great detail the sources of information concerning him.

2. Muir, Sir Wm., *Life of Mahomet*, 4 vols., 1861. The most elaborate work in English, containing much introductory material concerning pre-Islamic Arabia which is of great value.

3. Muir, Sir Wm., *The Life of Mahomet*, 1 vol., 1877. A thoroughly useful abridgment of the four-volume edition.

4. Muir, Sir Wm., *Mahomet and Islam*. Revised edition, 1887. An excellent popular sketch of the prophet's life, embodying the ideas of the preceding volumes.

5. Dozy, Prof. R. P. A. *Essai sur l'Histoire d'Islamisme*, pp. 1-110. A very choice sketch, especially valuable for its discussion of the conditions which prepared the way for Islam.

6. Sprenger, A. *Leben und Lehre des Mohammed*, 3 vols., 1862. Valuable for the attention paid to traditions, but quite radical in its conclusions.

7. Müller, A. *Der Islam im Morgen- und Abendland*, 2 vols., 1885. Vol. I. pp. 44-172. An interesting but disconnected sketch of Muhammad's life, discussing especially his motives and character.

8. Palmer, E. H. *The Qur'ân*, Vol VI. in "Sacred Books of the East," 1880. The introduction includes a discussion of this theme.

9. Stobart, J. W. H. *Islam and its Founder*. (Non-Christian Religious Systems) 1876. Very valuable as a convenient compendium of facts, but written in a very controversial spirit.

10. Irving, Washington. *Life of Mahomet*. A very interesting life, which ranks high as literature but cannot be used as an authority.

11. Wellhausen, Prof. Julius. Article in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. xvi. pp. 545-61. A thoroughly candid and philosophical discussion.

12. Hughes, Rev. T. P. *A Dictionary of Islam*, 1885. A cyclopædia of Muhammadan biography, customs and theology. Note especially the article on Muhammad's character (p. 387 ff.) containing the estimates of the best critics.

PART FIRST, THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD.

1. *Muhammad's birth and early life.*—Muhammad was born at Mecca, the chief city of Central Arabia, in April,¹ A. D. 571. He belonged to the influential family of the Quraish. His grandfather, Abd al Muttalib, and his great-grandfather, Hashim, were possessors of some spiritual authority; and the latter's grandfather, Kussai, had also obtained temporal power. Influence and power had passed, however, before Muhammad's birth, to another branch of the Quraish and Abd Allah, his father, was a poor and insignificant merchant.² His mother, Amina, who was also a descendant of Kussai, lost her husband shortly after the birth of her son. According to the custom of the time, she handed over her child to a Bedouin nurse, who kept him rather more than two years. She then brought him back to Mecca, because he was afflicted with epileptic fits, which she, according to the common opinion in the East, ascribed to evil spirits. In his sixth year he lost his mother. The boy received a fatherly welcome from his grandfather, Abd al Muttalib, and, after his death, from his uncle, Abu Talib. Definite information about his youth is unfortunately lacking.³ We only know with certainty that he made several trading journeys with his uncles to Syria and to Southern Arabia, on which he became acquainted with the deplorable condition of his country, owing, in some communities, to the oppression of alien rulers, and in others to internal decay. We also know that he later did business both for himself and for others; and that he spent some time as a herdsman in the neighborhood of Mecca. At the age of twenty-five he won the hand of a rich widow, Khadija, also of the race of Kussai, in whose employ he had been. Henceforth he

¹ For discussion of this date cf. Müller, Vol. I. p. 44 note.

² This is mentioned in the Quran as a reason for the unbelief of many Meccans, for they said that if the revelation was really from God, it would have been entrusted to a more important man than Muhammad, Sura 43:30. His only reply was that it was the grace of God, Sura 28:85, 86.

³ All that can be said about these earlier years is stated by Muir, chaps. 1 and 2 (abr. edit.); also Hughes' *Dict. Islam*, pp. 367-9. His unusual purity of mind and correctness of conduct won him the popular title of *al-Amin*, "the faithful."

lived in Mecca, devoting himself more to religious meditation than to commercial transactions.

II. *Influences which led him to institute a new religion.*—In Arabia at this time both Judaism and Christianity were very prominent. The former prevailed in the South, the Hijaz, and in Medina; the latter in Abyssinia, in the South, and on the Syrian border. Entire tribes as well as individuals had embraced one of these religions. Idolatry was at that time fast losing its hold; and in Central Arabia was retained more out of reverence for ancestors or from self-interest than from any real religious feeling. Among those who were monotheists before Muhammad began to preach was a cousin of Muhammad's wife, Waraqa¹ Ibn Naufal. He embraced Judaism and afterwards Christianity, read both the New and Old Testaments and translated a portion of the former into Arabic. We may fairly assume that this scholar had a great influence upon the impressionable spirit of his relative and aroused him to thoughtfulness on religious questions. But Muhammad found in both revealed religions, as they were taught at his time in Arabia, too many shortcomings to make it possible for him to embrace either of them. He always regarded Moses and Christ as apostles of the Lord, divinely selected to regenerate corrupt humanity; but the Old Testament with which he came into contact was but a dead letter and the Christianity which he knew was a dogmatism leading to most perverted views of the reality of God and bordering on polytheism. Abraham, who united belief in one God with love for humanity, was his ideal apostle of Allah, whose faith he could share with full conviction. As soon as he felt himself called to appear among his people as a religious teacher, he was the more ready to present Abraham as a pattern since he was regarded by the people of Mecca and the neighboring provinces as their progenitor and as the founder of the holy temple to which, from the earliest times, yearly pilgrimages were made. The fundamental elements of the new religion were the existence of one God, neither a triune God nor one surrounded by

¹Compare Sprenger, Vol. I., 124-134, where is gathered up all available information regarding Waraqa.

inferiors, who made known his will through prophets, and a future world, in which the righteous were to be rewarded and the ungodly punished. Whether Muhammad raised himself to such a spiritual height by his own reflection or whether Waraqa discovered serious shortcomings in the Christianity which he had accepted in the place of Judaism, and made them known to Muhammad, cannot now be historically determined, although Muslim authorities inform us that Waraqa shared Muhammad's views and encouraged him in his mission as a reformer of Judaism and Christianity. Likewise we cannot say with certainty whether Muhammad, in order to gain more credence and recognition among his weak contemporaries purposely represented what he considered the truth as a direct revelation from heaven, or whether, on the authority of some biblical passages, he actually considered himself supernaturally inspired by God, and—at least at the beginning—thought he really had to do with angels who brought the word of God to him from heaven and commanded him to proclaim it to lost humanity. But we rather incline to the latter view, for he frequently suffered from epileptic fits, which in his time were considered a misfortune caused by evil spirits. He at first regarded himself as one possessed by a demon and only by degrees arrived at the conviction that evil spirits could have no power over a man devoted to God like himself. So, supported by his purity of heart, he might have ascribed the states of unconsciousness, followed by visions, which he frequently experienced, to an intercourse with angels, and considered that which filled his soul after his return to consciousness a divine inspiration.

III. *Meager results of Muhammad's early preaching.*—Muhammad was, according to Muslim tradition, about forty years old when he received the first revelation from heaven. However, he communicated this, and those immediately following, only to his wife, Khadija, his young cousin Ali, and his most trusted friends. It was not until he had made about forty proselytes, among whom, however, only a few, such as the future caliphs, Abu Bakr and Uthman, belonged to the wealthier and more influential classes, that some Quran verses appeared which bade him come forth

openly as a preacher and defy the raillery of the unbelievers. Then he strove with all his might against the superstition of the people of Mecca, exhorted them to lead a moral, godly life, and demanded that they should believe in an all-powerful, all-wise, eternal, indivisible, just, yet merciful God who had filled him, as well as other prophets before him, with divine inspiration, and who in a future life would bring both righteous and sinful to judgment, and reward or punish. But Muhammad found no favor among his nearest relatives; Abu Talib did not adopt his faith and Abu Lahab, another uncle, even threw a stone¹ at him to silence him. Some said, "Are we to give up the faith of our fathers and follow this innovator?" Others said, "Is he of more importance than any other poet or soothsayer?"² Some said he was crazy, others called him in definite terms a liar, and all demanded a miracle as proof of his mission.

IV. *The first emigration.*—But although Muhammad was exposed to the scorn and insult of the idolaters of Mecca, nevertheless his yet influential family protected him from further violence. On the other hand, many Muslims who were without protection were obliged, in the fifth year of his mission, to leave Arabia and seek refuge on African soil in order to escape ill-treatment at the hands of the Quraish.³ Muhammad himself at this time was so cast down and discouraged that he, either from fear or in the hope of succeeding more readily in this way, for a moment raised the idols of Mecca, which he had hitherto represented as powerless, to the position of mediators between God and man. However, he soon recovered himself and declared his earlier opinion to be a suggestion of Satan,⁴ whereupon naturally the persecution of his enemies increased. Shortly afterwards Hamza, one of the bravest and strongest men of Mecca, touched by the situation of his nephew, at once took the field against Abu Jahl, one

¹ With reference to this compare Sura III.

² Compare Sura 69:40-44.

³ A. D. 615. This action was important. It proved the sincerity, self-sacrifice and determination of the Muslims, and gave the new religion a standing, even with the hostile Quraish.

⁴ Compare Suras 53:19-23; 17:75, 76. For an excellent statement cf. Palmer Vol. I., chap. xxvi.

of the most zealous supporters of the old faith, and soon publicly confessed Islam. Umar also followed his example, partly from conviction and partly on account of his sister, who for some time had been a secret adherent of Muhammad and in whose house he had found some fragments of the Quran.¹ Soon afterwards when Abu Talib found out that Umar, previous to his conversion, had plotted against the life of Muhammad, he feared that some one else would attempt it, impelled either by religious fanaticism or by offers from the Quraish. So he took him away from the city and brought him to his fortified estate.

V. *The ban.*—The Quraish, enraged at Abu Talib's measures, now demanded the surrender of Muhammad, and when he stoutly refused to surrender his nephew to them he and all his house who sided with him were put under the ban. For three years all intercourse was dropped between the Quraish and the Hashimites, that is between the descendants of Abd Shams and Naufal and those of Muttalib and Hashim, the four grandsons of Kussai. Therefore Muhammad was able to pursue his vocation of preacher only during the holy pilgrimage months, in which all hostilities among the Arabs were suspended. At last this ban was removed in consequence of the interest which the proscribed excited even among their religious opponents. But almost at the same time Muhammad lost his wife Khadija and his uncle Abu Talib, and his enemies, emboldened by this, compelled him to seek protection among his relatives, the people of Taif,² a village situated three or four days' journey southeast from Mecca. But he was driven out of the town with stones by the fanatic people, and forced to return to his native place, where he fortunately found a safe refuge with some prominent citizens who did not belong to the Quraish.

VI. *The "night journey."* *The "Hijra."*—Despite all the reverses which he suffered on his journey he arrived at Mecca with renewed courage, strengthened by a dream or vision in which a winged horse bore him first to Jerusalem and then up to heaven, where God himself greeted him as his most loved apostle and declared

¹ For the story of his conversion *cf.* Stobart, *Islām*, p. 83.

² For a good account of his experiences at Taif *cf.* Müller, Vol. I., p. 79.

him his noblest creature.¹ By narrating this vision he brought fresh insult upon himself and even estranged some of his followers. Yet at the next pilgrimage, when he expounded his new doctrine to the pilgrims, he obtained a hearing among some inhabitants of Medina of the race of the Khazraj, who were related to him through his mother. These men, to be sure, could not improve his situation; still they worked quietly spreading Islam at their home, so that the next year (621 A. D.) the number of Muslims at Medina had doubled and already many of the believing Meccans had found a refuge among them. The inhabitants of Medina, aside from their relationship with Muhammad, were the more ready to listen to him because they had long been prepared by the Jews who lived there for the appearance of a prophet. Perchance they also hoped by means of Muhammad and the new faith to gain the supremacy over Mecca, for they were jealous of her importance as the place of the pilgrimage. At the next festival, when Muhammad had reached the age of fifty-three lunar years, seventy-three people from Medina appeared in Mecca, who not only confessed his faith, but also entered into a formal offensive and defensive alliance with him and invited him and all the Muslims to remove to their city. Muhammad still stayed some months in Mecca, but at last, in September, 622, when he learned that his enemies were making fresh plans against his life, he escaped with Abu Bakr to Medina.

VII. *Efforts to conciliate the Jews and to harass the people of Mecca.*—His first care was to establish the worship and to give a new home to the refugees. A mosque was built and an alliance established between them and the people of Medina, which even extended to a mutual inheritance to the detriment even of blood relatives. Several ordinances were proclaimed in order to win over the numerous and wealthy Jewish population. But these were soon rescinded because that people insisted on the preservation of the entire Mosaic law, and, besides, did not recognize him as a prophet because he was not of the race of David. His most important act during the first year of the exile was the permission to make war in the name of God upon the enemies of

¹ Cf. Palmer, Vol. I., xxxi.

Islam.¹ To be sure he could not yet think of a formal war against the Meccans, but he hoped to be able to attack their Syrian caravans and injure their foreign trade. But the Quraish were too experienced to go into the traps laid for them, and either sent a strong guard with their caravans or sent them by a circuit to the north. Then Muhammad had resource to trickery, and ordered a raid in a holy month during which it is customary in Arabia to lay aside all hostilities. Since, however, this raid was reprobated by the believers to whom ancient custom was yet sacred, he made the captain of the band answerable for it and asserted that his sealed and ambiguous commands had been overstepped, yet he excused this man afterwards and even accepted a part of the booty. Here appears already, as in the case of the recognition of mediatory gods, a sort of instability in the conduct of Muhammad and the beginning of a series of acts which he must have known to be wrong and only began or permitted for one purpose—injury to unbelievers.

VIII. *The victory of Badr*.—The first real conflict between the Muslims and the people of Mecca occurred in the month of Ramadhan of the second year of the Hijra. Also on this occasion Muhammad left Medina with his followers for the purpose of plundering a rich caravan from Syria. But its leader, Abu Sufian, learned of this plan and hastily sent for assistance to Mecca. These attacked the Muslims while the caravan went home along the seacoast in safety. At Badr (Bedr), a place some distance southwest of Medina, occurred the first battle. There were about six hundred from Mecca and three hundred and fourteen Muslims. The former were defeated and left seventy men on the field and a like number of prisoners, for whom a considerable ransom had to be paid. Among the latter was Abbas, the rich uncle of Muhammad, who indeed returned to his native city, but from that time served his nephew as a spy. Muhammad himself took no part in the battle, for he was neither brave nor skilled in arms, but remained praying in a tent. He therefore ascribed this victory not to the bravery of his troops, among whom Ali and Hamza especially distinguished them-

¹ Cf. Sura 22:40.

selves, but to the assistance of an invisible host of angels.¹ The booty was equally divided this time, but shortly after the return to Medina, the law was promulgated according to which a fifth was reserved for the prophet, his relatives, the poor, orphans, and travelers.²

IX. *Attacks upon Jews.*—The moral effect of this victory and its great booty contributed much to the growth of the power and consequence of Muhammad, and attracted so many people to his standard that, after some sentences of death against the Jews in the neighborhood of Medina, he was able formally to declare war against the Jewish family of the Beni Kainukaa, some of whom dwelt in the city, and by besieging their stronghold he was able to compel them to unconditional surrender. Abd Allah Ibn Ubajj, a chieftain of the family of Khazraj, under whose protection the Jews were, would not consent to their execution as Muhammad wished. They were allowed to go to Syria, but of course without their property.

X. *Disastrous defeat at Mount Uhud (Ohod).* For thirteen months Muhammad could plunder the caravans of the Quraish with impunity and take the field against their allies. At last, in order to destroy his power and avenge their loss at Badr, they collected an army of three thousand men and marched to Medina. Muhammad wished to await the enemy in the city; but was forced, either by the men of Medina or by his own eager soldiers, to give battle outside in the neighborhood of the mountain Uhud (Ohod). Here he lost seventy of his best soldiers, among them his uncle Hamza. He himself was wounded and even for a time thought to be dead. Probably for this reason the Quraish did not follow up their victory. On the way back they learned that Muhammad was still alive, but they did not dare to return to Medina, because they had received false information from one of his followers to the effect that new forces had come to his aid.

Other misfortunes followed the defeat at Uhud. Many of the learned Muslims were treacherously murdered by the heathen

¹ Sura 3 : 120, 121 ; 8 : 9, 10, 17.

² Sura 8 : 42.

Arabs. In order to make amends to his followers for their continued ill-luck, Muhammad attacked a Jewish tribe (the Banû'n-Naphîr) dwelling near Medina. Since he was unable to subdue them in their strongholds, he was obliged to let them go to Syria with a portion of their possessions. The rest of their property was claimed in the name of God by the prophet,¹ because it was gained without bloodshed. He then distributed it among the poorer of his fellow refugees. This and some other important operations against various Arab tribes, whom he knew how to surprise, one by one, with an overwhelming force, finally caused his enemies again to unite in order to annihilate him at one stroke.

XI. *The siege of Medina.*—In the fifth year of the Hijra (March, 627) ten thousand men, led by Abu Sufian, the commander of the Quraish, marched against Medina. Muhammad, who had barely three thousand men at his command was obliged to shut himself up in the city and to protect the exposed quarters from attack by a ditch. The Arabs, being inexperienced in sieges, were not in a condition to storm Medina. Moreover, unity and mutual confidence were lacking among the different sections of their army. When, therefore, after a siege of some weeks, an unusually cold and stormy season came on, they raised the siege and went home. This time Muhammad again took a terrible vengeance for his troubles, upon a Jewish tribe, the Banu Quraiza,² who had gone over to the men of Mecca. Although they surrendered unconditionally to him, he caused the men to be executed and the women and children to be sold as slaves. This little victory did not take away the disgrace which Muhammad had brought upon himself by seeking protection behind a ditch instead of relying on his sword and lance and the help of God. To be sure he continued his raids upon the caravans of his enemies and now and then sent small detachments against tribes not allied to him, yet this policy neither increased his power nor advanced his reputation.

XII. *Proposed pilgrimage to Mecca.*—In the next year (628 A.D.) he decided to make an open advance in order to regain his stand-

¹ Cf. Sura 59 : 1-17 for Muhammad's justification of this action.

² Cf. Sura 33 : 26, also Muir, Vol. iii., p. 276ff, or abridged edition, chapter 17.

ing. He resolved to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, and required not only all believers but also all heathen Arabs with whom he was on good terms to accompany him. His call did not meet with the desired response, but since he had announced the journey to Mecca in the name of God, he could not draw back but was obliged, in view of the comparatively small number¹ of his followers, to trust to the aversion of the Quraish to carrying on war during the sacred months. But he deceived himself, for although they had no wish to fight with him, they were fully determined to refuse him entrance to the holy city. He obtained, however, something far more important than permission to complete the ceremonies of the pilgrimage in the neighborhood of the temple, for he arranged a truce with his enemies which, to be sure, gave many advantages to them, but in which he was recognized as an equal power. All hostility was to be laid aside, he could henceforth without fear send his missionaries to all parts of Arabia and in addition, in the next year, could celebrate the pilgrimage festival in Mecca for three days without hindrance.

XIII. *Another Jewish campaign.*—In order to appease those who were dissatisfied with the outcome of this pilgrimage,² Muhammad again ordered a campaign against the Jews, notably against those of Khaibar and Fadak, who had strongholds four or five days' journey north of Medina. Some of these were stormed, whereupon the others surrendered and were condemned to pay half of their income as tribute.

XIV. *Attempt to poison Muhammad.*—During his stay in one of the conquered castles, Muhammad came near losing his life in the midst of his career; for a Jewess who had lost a near relative in the battle offered him a poisoned dish. No sooner had he tasted it than he became aware of its character and escaped the fate intended for him.

¹ Various estimated at between 700 and 1600.

² Compare Sura 48.